

DANIEL DRAKE AS A NINETEENTH CENTURY EDUCATIONAL REFORMER¹

EMANUEL D. RUDOLPH, Department of Botany, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210

ABSTRACT. If Daniel Drake is remembered as an educator, it is usually for his pioneering efforts in establishing medical schools and related institutions in Ohio, and for his attempts to improve the quality of medical instruction. However, Drake's entire professional and public life can be interpreted as a continuous educational endeavor. Although Drake's own education was limited, he early learned the value of reading for self-instruction and preached the value of that trait for the rest of his life. After his experiences in Philadelphia, Drake tried to emulate its educational and professional establishments in Cincinnati. As time went on, he developed a more independent approach to education which championed a new "Western Country" attitude. He was active in The Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers that met annually in the 1830s which had a broad view of the term "teacher." These meetings were Drake's most active involvement with the reforming of non-medical teaching where his contributions were ahead of his times.

OHIO J. SCI. 85 (4): 146-151, 1985

Daniel Drake (1785-1852) was called the "Franklin of the West," because like Benjamin Franklin, he was a versatile person who initiated and became involved with enumerable scientific and social projects. On this bicentennial of his birth, I want to consider mainly Drake's activities that related to the education of youth, and particularly his connection with the Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers from 1831 to 1839, and to try to evaluate these activities with reference to Drake's philosophy and to educational theories of those times. It is my contention that many of Drake's activities throughout his life can be interpreted as attempts to educate others in the values of self and formal education. His attempts at initiating medical education in Cincinnati and of reforming medical education in the West are well documented, widely discussed, and generally known (Mansfield 1860, Juettner 1909, Shapiro and Miller 1970). However, less well known is his involvement in the general educational reform movements of the early nineteenth century in Ohio and the West.

The Ohio Valley in the vicinity of Cincinnati at the beginning of the nineteenth century was an area in which diverse groups of people settled. There were those from New England who came with strong sentiments for the importance of formal education for children and young adults. There were those from Virginia, Kentucky and Pennsylvania who had less strong feelings for the need of formal education. And, then too, there were the new foreign immigrants, mainly Germans, of peasant origins who entirely lacked any educational traditions. The unifying forces opposing these divisions were those connected with the growth of cities and the location in them of outstanding leaders. Cincinnati with its Daniel Drake is a good example of this. From 1800 to 1830 the population of Cincinnati had increased from 750 to almost 25,000 and it doubled again in the next decade.

In 1800 Drake at age 15 came to this city of 750 people as apprentice to Dr. William Goforth. His education up to then had been from his father's library of books said to contain the Bible, Rippon's Collection of Hymns, Dilworth's and Webster's Spelling Books, an Almanac, Entick's Dic-

¹Manuscript received 13 May 1985 (#85-17).

tionary, Scott's Lessons, Aesop's Fables, Franklin's Life, and a book called History of Mellion—a Romance of Chivalry. Late in life Drake wrote about his education, "I had learned to spell all the words in Dilworth, and a good portion of those in Noah Webster, Jr., whose spelling book then seemed to me a greater marvel than does his Quarto Dictionary, now lying before me. As a reader, I was equal to any, in what I regarded as the highest perfection, a loud and toneless voice. In chirography I was *so-so*, in geography obscure, and in history O! In arithmetic, as far as the double rule of three, practice, tare and tret, interest, and even fractions of decimals. My greatest acquirement, that of which I was rather proud, was some knowledge of surveying, acquired from Love (I mean to name the author, as well as my taste,) but which I have long since forgotten. Of grammar I knew nothing, and unfortunately, there was no one, within my reach, who could teach it." (Mansfield 1860, Drake 1948). Drake later prided himself in being "of the people" in his background and early education which included some sporadic episodes of school with itinerant teachers. In any event, Drake developed a belief that independent reading of instructional and other good books was an important aspect of one's educational development.

Drake's experiences with scientific and literary organizations during his medical education in Philadelphia in 1805-1806 and 1815-1816 no doubt strengthened his conviction that formal education of youth was important. Already in 1814 he helped organize the Cincinnati Lancasterian Seminary. The mode of instruction of which was based on the somewhat popular principles of Joseph Lancaster, an English educator, who found that older pupils could teach younger ones with improvement of learning thus eliminating the need for many teachers in places where finances were short. The Philadelphia experiences also must have spurred Drake to emulate the various education and professional organizations found there. A list of those which over the years were initiated or aided

by him in Cincinnati is impressive: the Cincinnati Lyceum; the Cincinnati Circulating Library Association; the First District Medical Society of Cincinnati; the School of Literature and the Arts; the Cincinnati College; the Cincinnati Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Manufactures, and Domestic Economy; the Western Museum Society; the Medical College of Ohio; the Ohio Mechanics Institute; the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio; and the Cincinnati Medical Library Association, in addition to the Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers. It must have been impressive to a young man from the West to live and study in Philadelphia where so many cultural and educational opportunities were available. In 1820 Drake in an Anniversary Discourse, on the State and Prospects of the Western Museum Society at the Opening of its Museum has this to say about education: "To what shall we attribute the decreasing necessity and practice of sending our sons abroad for an education; but the improving state of our own institutions, the augmentation of their libraries, cabinets and philosophical apparatus, and the employment of more learned professors? To what, in short, shall we ascribe the decided amelioration of our national character, and its regular though tardy approaches towards refinement and elegance, but the cultivation of letters and science?" (Drake in Shapiro and Miller 1970).

In a sense Drake came back and tried to make Cincinnati the new Philadelphia of the West. But, as Prof. Henry Shapiro (Shapiro and Miller 1970) has noted, as Drake got older he became more and more convinced that the West had a culture of its own that needed nurturing and that it could offer new vigor and freshness to that of the older eastern parts of country. In 1833 Drake gave a talk to the Literary Convention of Kentucky at Transylvania University entitled, "Remarks on the Importance of Promoting Literary and Social Concert, in the Valley of the Mississippi, as a Means of Elevating Its Character, and

Perpetuating the Union," which contained the following comments: "we should foster western genius, encourage western writers, patronize western publishers, augment the number of western readers, and create a western heart." (Drake in Shapiro and Miller 1970).

The Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers, according to its constitution adapted in 1834, states: "Whereas the Convention of Teachers assembled in Cincinnati, deeply impressed with the importance of organizing their profession in the Valley of the Mississippi, by a permanent association, in order to promote the sacred interests of Education so far as may be confided to their care, by collecting the distant members, advancing their mutual improvement and elevating the profession to its just, intellectual, and moral influence on the community, do hereby resolve ourselves into a permanent body, to be governed by the following constitution." It goes on to declare, "1. This association shall be known by the name of 'The Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers,' (and) 2. Its objects shall be to promote, by every laudable means, the diffusion of knowledge in regard to Education, and especially, by aiming at the elevation of the character of Teachers who shall have adapted Instruction as their regular profession." (Western 1835). Daniel Drake's name is one of the 125 appended as members. Edward D. Mansfield who became a member soon after, had this to say about the College of Teachers in 1860:

"About the year 1833, was founded what was called the "COLLEGE OF TEACHERS," which continued ten years, and was an institution of great utility and wide influence. Its object was both professional and popular; to unite and improve teachers, and, at the same time, to commend the cause of education to the public mind. The former object might have been obtained by the meeting of practical teachers only; but the latter required that gentlemen of science and general reputation, who had weight with the community, should also be connected with it. Accordingly, a large array of distinguished persons took part in its

proceedings; and I doubt whether in one association, and in an equal space of time, there was ever concentrated in this country, a larger measure of talent, of information, and of zeal. Among those who either spoke or wrote for it, were ALBERT PICKETT, the President, and for half a century an able teacher, Dr. Drake, the Hon. THOMAS SMITH GRIMKE, the Rev. JOSHUA L. WILSON, ALEXANDER KINMONT, JAMES H. PERKINS, Professor STOWE, Dr. BEECHER, Dr. ALEXANDER CAMPBELL, Arch Bishop PURCELL, President MCGUFFEY, Dr. AYUDELOTTE, Mrs. LYDIA SIGOURNERY, and Mrs. CAROLINE LEE HENTZE. . ."

In the meetings and objects of College of Teachers, Dr. Drake felt profound interest, and took an active part. The very name of teacher was dear to him. To be a teacher in his own profession, he thought to be his peculiar gift; nor did he confine himself to that only; he sought the society of clergymen, of professors, teachers, in fine, of all who by teaching sought to improve and regenerate the race. In the early meetings of the college he took part, and in its proceedings are recorded several valuable lectures and reports from his pen."

A writer at the turn of the century (Burns 1905) comments on the "College" as follows:

"This organization also had a predecessor, and educational society in Cincinnati, by name, the "Academic Institute," a local organization whose birth is of even date with that of Cincinnati's system of common schools, 1829, which, like Ben Adhem's name "led all the rest." The constitution adopted at this meeting showed a prolongation of name and the reason of it; Western Academic Institute and Board of Education. This board was to be chosen by the Society, and its prerogative was, individually or in committees, to visit and inspect the schools and academies of the members of the society, quarterly, or oftener, provided such visits did not contravene the duties of the city visitors of the district schools. The board of education, or visitors, was chosen from among the honorary members, not from the professional teachers. Some such idea lurked in the minds of those who shaped the section of the school law wherein "examiners of schools" were appointed. In a very few years the name of this body was changed to the [Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers]. Beginning with the fourth annual meeting in 1834 there were six volumes of proceedings published, [in] a series. The discussions of this body were carried on in three ways: formal addresses, reports by committees appointed the

previous year, and the floor debates. But human "systems have their day." The Teachers' College did not prove an exception. Its last meeting was in the early forties. It accomplished much for a cause of supreme importance, and workers in educational fields in Ohio owe it a debt which can be paid only in life-long gratitude, shown by handing on down the torch which these men lighted."

Daniel Drake was active in the College of Teachers' during the 10 years in which it functioned in the manner described. He served on a number of committees appointed to consider particular issues, many of which he proposed for consideration: the Committee on Anatomy and Physiology as a Branch of Study in Schools, and for the Best Method of Introducing and Prosecuting the Study of Anatomy and Physiology; the Committee to Study the Subject of Emulation; the Committee on Physical Education; the Committee on the Effects on the Progress and Character of the Learned Professions in the West of the Defective Preparation of so Large a Proportion of those who are Dedicated to these Professions; and the Committee on the Influence of Sunday School Instruction Upon Pupils of Common Schools. He actively participated in the discussions and in 1834 gave a major address on "The Philosophy of Family, School, and College Discipline." In that address he emphasized the new spirit of the West which would benefit from the strong sense of moral and intellectual discipline. He ended that address with a flowery call to the audience as follows: "Let all who would rejoice to see it [the West], not only the asylum of the exile, from the uttermost parts of an oppressed world, but the chosen and permanent abiding place of knowledge, religion and liberty, — stand forth, while it is yet in the morning of its days, and will bow its head to the rod of discipline, to lend a helping hand, in training its young footsteps, and giving them an impulse on the paths of loveliness and peace." (Drake 1835).

On the matter of the teaching of anatomy and physiology, Drake was much

more progressive than the others in the group. He thought that younger children should be taught these subjects and said that he "observed, that children under fifteen, of both sexes, are inquisitive on the structure and functions of their bodies, and saw no objection to placing an outline of anatomy and physiology on the same shelf with the first books of physical geography, chemistry, and natural philosophy." (Drake 1836). The final resolution was much less strong than Drake desired. After noting problems with lack of trained teachers, good books, and time, it stated, "Resolved, that it is expedient and proper that anatomy and physiology should, to a certain extent, be made branches of general elementary education in our high schools, colleges and universities; and that, to afford time in such of the latter as have a fixed term and course of studies; some of the branches of literature and science, now taught, should, if necessary be abridged." (Drake 1837). The matter of "Emulation or the love of comparative excellence as an original and fundamental principle of the human mind" required long discussions as to whether it should be supported as a principle. The final resolution that was adapted stated "Resolved, that that kind of Emulation which is awakened by rewards offered according to merit, is right in principle, and may be safely applied to the business of education." (Western 1838). The issue of Sunday Schools was formulated as follows, "Resolved, that Sunday Schools, when properly conducted, are a most valuable auxiliary to the Common Schools." (Western 1838).

When in 1840 the Cincinnati Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge was formed to be a local auxiliary group to the College of Teachers, Daniel Drake was listed among its founders. However, by this time Drake was teaching at the Louisville Medical Institute. Also by then new issues in public education were emerging and professional teachers were going off in new directions in their organization. Drake had been in the forefront of edu-

cational reform, however as Lindberg (in McGuffey 1976) notes, "Dr. Drake's ideas on education were considered wildly impractical. He advised the teaching of anatomy and physiology in the public schools and the enactment of a law compelling a man to give his children some kind of education! Even the New West, nursery of adventurous spirits, recoiled before such radicalism."

Thus, Daniel Drake was concerned with issues of public education that are ever fresh: universal free education, the recognition and rewarding of merit, the relationship of religion to public education; the training for professions in public schools; improving the education of females; the importance of understanding the human body and of exercising it properly. Even if his language is flowery and somewhat archaic to us, his ideas are still simple and sensible. Some of Drake's thoughts about education and the importance of the West received wider circulation than the College of Teachers because a few of his writings were excerpted in the McGuffey Readers in the 1840s and early 1850s. A portion of one of these selections will provide an example: (McGuffey 1976)

"A native of the West may be confided in as his country's hope. Compare him with the native of a great maritime city, on the verge of the nation,—his birth-place the fourth story of a house, hemmed in by surrounding edifices, his play-ground a pavement, the scene of his juvenile rambles an arcade of shops, his young eyes feasted on the flags of a hundred alien governments, the streets in which he wanders crowded with foreigners, and the ocean, common to all nations, forever expanding to his view.

Estimate his love of country, as far as it depends on local and early attachments, and then contrast him with the young backwoodsman, born and reared amidst objects scenes, and events, which you can all bring to mind;—the jutting rocks in the great road, half alive with organic remains, or sparkling with crystals; the quiet old walnut tree, dropping its nuts upon the yellow leaves, as the morning sun melts the October frost; the grape-vine swing; the chase after the cowardly black snake, till it creeps under the rotten log;

the sitting down to rest upon the crumbling trunk, and an idle examination of the mushrooms and mosses which grow from its ruins.

Then the wading in the shallow stream, and upturning of the flat stones, to find bait with which to fish in the deeper waters; next the plunder of a bird's nest, to make necklaces of the speckled eggs, for her who has plundered him of his young heart; then the beech tree with its smooth body, on which he cuts the initials of her name interlocked with his own; finally, the great hollow stump, by the path that leads up the valley to the log school-house, its dry bark peeled off, and the stately polk-weed growing from its center, and bending with crimson berries: which invite him to sit down and write upon its polished wood, how much pleasanter it is to extract ground squirrels from beneath its roots, than to extract the square root, under that labor-saving machine, the ferule of a teacher!

The affections of one who is blest with such reminiscences, like the branches of our beautiful trumpet flower, strike their roots into every surrounding object, and derive support from all which stand within their reach. The love of country is with him a constitutional and governing principle. If he be a mechanic, the wood and iron which he moulds into form, are dear to his heart, because they remind him of his own hills and forests; if a husbandman, he holds companionship with growing corn, as the offspring of his native soil; if a legislator, his dreams are filled with sights of national prosperity to flow from his beneficent enactments; if a scholar, devoted to the interests of literature, in his lone and excited hours of midnight study, while the winds are hushed and all animated nature sleeps, when the silence is so profound, that the stroke of his own pen grates, loud and harsh, upon his ear, and fancy, from the great deep of his luminous intellect, draws up new forms of smiling beauty and solemn grandeur; the genius of his country hovers nigh, and sheds over its pages an essence of patriotism, sweeter than the honey-dew which the summer night distils upon the leaves of our forest trees."

Daniel Drake was a major figure in the development of educational concerns in the Ohio Valley. He actively participated in many educational programs. In the professional teachers association in the 1830s he was a very prominent actor who helped further the aims of the "College of Teachers." His role was an important one that has had lasting value, even if he was a reformer well ahead of his times in ideas.

LITERATURE CITED

- Burns, J. J. 1905 Educational history of Ohio, a history of its progress since the formation of the state, together with portraits and biographies of past and present state officials. Historical Publications Co., Columbus, OH. 756 p.
- Drake, D. 1835 Discipline, discourse on the philosophy of family, school, and college discipline. Trans. Fourth Ann. Meet. Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers. p. 31-62.
- 1836 Discussion on the preceding report [Report on anatomy and physiology as a branch of study in schools.] Trans. Fifth Ann. Meet. Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers. p. 125-126.
- 1837 Report on the best method of introducing and prosecuting the study of anatomy and physiology. Trans. Sixth Ann. Meet. Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers. p. 235-237.
- 1948 Pioneer life in Kentucky 1785-1800. From the original manuscript, with introductory comments and a biographical sketch. Emmet Field Horine, M.D. (ed.). Henry Schuman, New York. 257 p.
- Juettner, O. 1909 Daniel Drake and his followers, historical and biographical sketches. Harvey Publishing Co., Cincinnati, OH. 496 p.
- Mansfield, E. D. 1860 Memoirs of the life and services of Daniel Drake, M.D., physician, professor, and author; with notices of the early settlement of Cincinnati, and some of its pioneer citizens. Applegate and Co., Cincinnati, OH. 408 p.
- McGuffey, W. H. 1976 The annotated McGuffey, selections from the McGuffey Electric Readers 1836-1920. Stanley W. Lindberg, (ed.). Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., New York. 358 p.
- Shapiro, H. D. and Z. L. Miller (eds.) 1970 Physician to the West; selected writings of Daniel Drake on science and society. University Press of Kentucky, Lexington. 419 p.
- Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers 1835 Trans. Fourth Ann. Meet. held in Cincinnati October 1834. Josiah Drake, Cincinnati, OH. p. 22-24.
- 1838 Trans. Eighth Ann. Meet. held in Cincinnati in 1837. Josiah Drake, Cincinnati, OH. p. 27-28